



# INDEXA

Helping to Make DX Happen Since 1983

Summer 2021

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A 501(c)(3) non-profit organization for the enhancement of amateur radio, worldwide peace, and friendship

## INDEXA

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## Lord Howe Island DXpedition 2009 VK9LA

By Chris Chapman VK3QB from the Summer Issue 2010 Edition



Lord Howe Island (LHI) is located in the South Pacific, approximately 700km east of mainland Australia and is widely regarded as the most beautiful island in the western south Pacific region. It is the closest island getaway from Sydney and is less than two hours flying time from Sydney and Brisbane. The team was made up of the following operators: Tony IZ3ESV, San K5YY, Bob N2OO, Lance N2OZ, Stan SQ8X, Peter SQ9DIE, Victoria SV2KBS, Tex VK1TX, Luke VK3HJ, John VK4IO, Catherine VK4VCH, Chris VK5CP, Jay W5SL, John VK5PO, Bill VK4FW and Chris VK3QB.



### Arrival and Setup

The DXpedition was to officially begin on 23rd March 2009, but Bill VK4FW was able to fly onto LHI a couple of days earlier. This gave me the chance to work Bill from my home QTH once he had established a basic station set-up, and I was very pleased to be the first in the log with VK9LA – both on SSB and CW on 30 meters. Over the course of the next two days the remaining 15 operators and some partners arrived on the island. The flight from Sydney was smooth and chatter was predominantly focused on radio matters—as almost half the passengers were the LHI DXpedition crew. The aircraft was a 30 seater Dash-8 and I suspect that our constant banter, laughter and impending excitement provided the rest of the passengers with a curious but entertaining air travel experience. Abnormal people (i.e. 99.9% of the population) simply do not understand or appreciate the wonders of Amateur Radio and DXpeditions!

On arrival at the island we were met by Bill VK4FW who immediately put us to work getting the towers up and beams erected at the Blue Lagoon Lodge. The team was spread between 2 camps. The Beachcomber Lodge was located at the top of a small hill and operated the CW stations. This became known as the "CW Camp". About 1 km away from the CW Camp down by the beach was the Blue Lagoon or "SSB Camp", and this is where we ran the SSB and RTTY stations. The CW Camp had elevated verticals for 30 and 40 meters each with 42 radials, dipoles for 80 and 160 meters and an R5 vertical, as well as a three element tribander on 20, 15 and 10. This camp was, for the most part, fully setup and operational within the first 24 hours.

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**inside...** *Director in the Spotlight - Gary Dixon K4MQG (Page 6)*

The SSB Camp required more time and effort than originally planned. First was the 3 element 20mtr beam. This took longer than expected due to space constraints, so the remaining antennae were left until the following day. The SSB Camp worked 20 meters SSB hard the first night. The next day was spent running 20 meters SSB whilst a number of operators.

The VK9LA team had more or less “taken over” these two tourist facilities so were able to get some latitude and cooperation from the respective owners. The owner of the Beach Comber is also a licensed radio operator VK9FLHI and was extremely helpful, providing access to his utility vehicle enabling us to ferry equipment between the two camps. Of particular interest was John, VK4IO and his “arborist’s tool” – really a super duper sling shot. This device is something to see in action. Within 20 minutes we had the 80 meter dipole up at about 100 feet with one end into a fantastic Norfolk Island Pine and the other into a Silky Oak. Shortly thereafter the 40 meter dipole was up about 85 feet. John then headed up to the CW Camp with Bill and got the 80 and 160 meter antennae up nice and high.

### **Day to day Operations**

ODXG and the more experienced operators made the decision that this would be a very informal DXpedition, and also wanted to provide an opportunity for the less experienced of us to build our skills and confidence. As such, we had no formal operating schedules although some rough patterns developed as the team “found their footings” and preferred bands, modes and shifts began to take form. Tuesday night I pulled the graveyard shift—my first time on the pointy end of a pileup. What a baptism of fire; forty meters CW. I took over from a very experienced operator (Bob N2OO) who had been working at 30 wpm plus and I dropped to about 20wpm. The first hour I got maybe 20 QSOs. It was a complete zoo. I managed to keep the pileup quite tight and as my ear tuned in the rate increased—the next five hours was a buzz. I finished up at 4am, extremely satisfied but rather exhausted. How does one describe this experience to the uninitiated? It was 6 hours of constant CW “noise”, it sounded like a cacophony of Morse code music but the problem being it was almost impossible to discern individual signals. The challenging and fun bit was taking control of the pileup—and N2OO and Bill VK4FW had explained this to me in the briefing sessions (I had also read W9KNI Bob Locher’s book “The Complete DXer” prior to the trip which was most instructive and entertaining—a recommended read). However, I did not appreciate just what this all meant until I experienced it first hand. My first hour was spent listening and learning how to break the pileup into manageable chunks—it sounded more like RTTY or PSK31 than CW! Coping strategies included:

- o going split up 2 or 3 KHz. (or more – sometime up/down +/-8Khz)
- o picking the strongest signals first
- o picking signals at the top/bottom end of the pileup
- o calling for certain regions/call areas/prefixes only
- o Joke!! QRSSSSSSSSSSSS. No QSO.



Chris VK3QB working the CW pileups on 40 metres

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# LOST MEMBERS

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## BLONDIE

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## Lord Howe Island DXpedition—VK9LA (con'd)

*(Continued from page 2)*

### **Making Contacts**

QSYing to the other side of my calling frequency – there was always at least one guy waiting for this approach. By the second hour I had some confidence and had a reasonable control of the pileup – and was very happy to increase the QSO rate from about 20 QSOs in the first hour to about 50 to 60 in the 2nd and 3rd hours. For the uninitiated this is not a fast QSO rate for a DXpedition operator – the more experienced operators were rocketing along at a much faster rate. However, as with most endeavors in life, practice makes perfect, and I found the experience to be fantastic and a load of fun. The next day I managed to get some intermittent internet access and I couldn't help but check the DX-cluster to see the usual barrage of helpful comments and advice.

There is a lesson to be learned here for those posting spots on the cluster; and also an interesting observation of how a change of operator can be interpreted by those "chasing the DX". I found it most insightful. By Wednesday morning (25th March) we had all antennae up with full coverage from 160 meters and all seven stations working at full capacity. Conditions were woeful from late Wednesday afternoon. I did graveyard shift and managed to work only 37 QSOs in 4 hours. It was very hard work and frustrating; I imagine for both ends of the pileups—or lack thereof. Most of other stations did not do much better. These conditions persisted for most of the night and into the next day, and did not start to improve until late Thursday. Dull conditions put a real dent in our ability to get the QSO rate up and put the pressure on for the rest of the trip. It is worth noting at this point that this DXpedition was arguably held at the absolute sunspot minima, with only 0.7 sunspots (i.e. Not even one!) being observed for the entire month of March. This would largely have accounted for the lack of propagation and activity on the higher bands. It should also be noted that LHI is 12,000 kilometers from North America, 9,500 kilometers from Japan and 16,500 kilometers from Central Europe, (all requiring multi-hop propagation on short path) further exacerbating the impact of these poor conditions on our QSO rates into NA, JA and EU on the higher bands. It would be entirely remiss of me not to make mention of John, VK5PO who almost single-handedly ran the RTTY station and handed out VK9LA to over 2,000 stations. A number of operators who had never worked RTTY before took the opportunity to look over John's shoulder and watch the signals "magically appear" on the computer screen. On the Friday (27th March) Chris VK5CP and I hiked up to Malabar, a hill about 210 meters above sea level on the southern point of the island. We both took the opportunity to work VK9LA as VK3QB/9 and VK5CP/9 respectively on 146.225 FM from the top of Malabar. Most of the remaining team members made the walk over the course of the weekend—well worthwhile a great view from the southern tip of the island up to the north. The adventurous EU guys took a guided tour up the 875 meter Mt Gower, regarded as one of the world's best day walks.

Some of the team entered into the CQ WPX SSB Contest; Multi Two All Band Category. Despite poor conditions we managed a score of 1,884,168 points. This put the VK9LA team in 39th place (or 2nd place for VK— with congrats to VK4KW), which I think the team can be very proud of considering the bulk of our effort and energy was being placed on the DX side of things rather than the contest. After the first few days we had all settled into a casual routine, and it was very nice not to be pressured, knowing that there would always be someone willing to take over the station when fatigue and/or frustration became overwhelming. Equally so, there was always someone willing to hand the controls over to a fresh operator. On the Monday evening (30th March) I wandered up to the CW Camp about 11pm and took over from Jay W5SL on 80 meters. Stateside was coming in consistently and after two hours propagation started to drop out and I moved on to the JAs. This will come as no surprise to many, but it's not possible to clear a pileup with JA. However, the JAs are very well mannered and the QSO rate was relatively high for a newcomer. I was very pleased to be averaging about 50-60 QSOs per hour. Propagation moved across HL, UA0 and very slowly into northern EU. I worked quite a few OM and OH but no southern EU was heard. Again, I finished up about 4am and headed back to the SSB Camp after checking in with fellow operators Tony IZ3ESV on 40 meters CW, and Stan SQ8X on 30 meters CW. About this time LHI was getting hit by the tail end of a cyclone that had been battering northern Australia and we all shared concerns for the Mellish Reef team (George, AA7JV and Tamas HA7RY) who were enroute at that stage to operate VK9GWM. The Mellish Reef team were almost 1,600 kilometers due north of our position which would have made a noticeable difference to both their weather and also propagation paths into JA, EU and NA. Thankfully they made it safely and we heard them on many occasions towards the end of our trip. The winds did cause some concern for our "tower and antenna man" John, VK4IO who made regular outdoor ventures to double/triple check the guys and general condition of the towers and antennae. Bill VK4FW and I had a fun and challenging late evening/early morning working 160 meters into North America (Stateside) and Canada. It was hard work but we had two sets of headphones and "shared the joy" of pulling the signals out of the mud.

*(Continued on page 5)*

## Lord Howe Island DXpedition—VK9LA (con'd)

*(Continued from page 4)*

It was particularly interesting to note that our own individual “internal DSPs” (i.e., our brains) would be tuning in on different signals in the receiver’s bandpass; probably also a result of a difference in hearing bandwidth (tone deafness I think is the common parlance!). At one stage I swore I had copied a K6 station and Bill was chastising me for not logging the WA7 station – strangely, we were both correct. The 160 meter DX bug has definitely bitten. As we entered the final couple of days of the DXpedition everyone was well into a routine and enjoying themselves.

The weather was unfortunately still windy and overcast. I was operating on irregular intervals and with varied sleep patterns, waking up at all hours buzzing from the pileups the previous night. Various sessions were spent doing some 17 meter SSB work with very good (although sporadic) openings into W, VE and PY, but we had to contend with very heavy QSB and QRM from the CW station up the hill. As we neared the end of the DXpedition I became more aware of the need for sleep if I was to operate the graveyard shifts. So, in good amateur tradition, I dragged Chris VK5CP to the local bar for a beer or 2 on more than one occasion—a sure-fire recipe to get some more sleep. On the last evening the whole team took some time out and went out for dinner. A good meal of locally caught fish was enjoyed by all. It also presented an ideal opportunity for a debriefing of the operation to date with all team members agreeing the experience had been thoroughly rewarding and enjoyable.

The “take-down and pack up” Due to the general concern about the weather a team decision was made to commence the “take-down” one day earlier than originally planned—this began on Wednesday 1st April. It was still windy and overcast, but very mild—around 24°C. Given the windy conditions and requirement to have all the gear FULLY packed and sealed by nightfall on Thursday it was necessary to play on the safe side and get the towers and beams packed away. The bulk of the morning and early afternoon was spent taking down the towers and beams. The afternoon was spent in the SSB shack listening to the operators work some 15 metres and later in the day 40 meters—as usual EU stations started coming in around 5pm local time. At 8pm I wandered to the CW Camp where we ran the VK/ZL night and worked a bunch of locals on SSB and CW. It was great to hear so many familiar callsigns and receive greetings from many VKs who knew various team members. Then I listened with Bill on the 160 meters grayline to stateside. We worked 12 stations or so with varying signals and a few JAs and VEs thrown in for good measure. The antenna did quite a good job considering it was a ¼ wave ‘L’ at 80 feet with about 12 radials and proved itself to be a good performer. I spent a lot of time listening on 160 meters on this trip with the more experienced operators and am looking forward to getting a similar antenna up at my home location. The final day prior to departure (Thursday 2nd April) was spent mostly dismantling the remaining antennae and equipment and getting it packed securely onto the pallets for return shipping to Brisbane.

The final day, Friday 3rd April was spent packing our personal luggage and relaxing prior to the flight back to Sydney. From memory I think that the flight was full and about 70% of the passengers were the VK9LA team; a good representation of a fine DXpedition.

### Summary

Many people do not realize just how much planning, effort and cost goes into putting on a DXpedition. Our DXpedition leader Bill VK4FW spent countless days planning the event, contacting people, organizing freight, sponsors, coordinating and generally making sure that the event was able to proceed. John VK4IO provided extensive assistance performing a three day dry-run of the antennae complement with Bill some weeks prior to the event. Once the antennae (and towers) were configured, tuned and tested they were fastidiously packed and prepared ready with the rest of the equipment for shipping to LHI. Without individual airfares (for the non-VK operators) taken into account I would estimate this DXpedition cost in the order of \$50,000; with additional significant cost not being accounted for as much of the equipment was provided either by the operators, ODXG or our sponsors. Arguably, this DXpedition occurred at the sunspot minima with virtually no sunspots for the 30 days preceding the DXpedition and the SFI not exceeding 68. This is reflected in the lack of QSOs on the higher bands.

## **Director in the Spotlight - Gary Dixon K4MQG**

I started in this wonderful hobby in January 1957 at the age of 16. From the beginning, even 64 years ago, I recognized that there were many facets of ham radio but I seemed to initially like the DXing side of the hobby and just stuck with it.

I have my original call, minus the "N" for Novice. Just did not want to change my call when that was the "cool" thing to do. It was like changing your name.

Chasing DX led to the opportunity and pleasure of meeting so many wonderful DXers from all over the world. I have had the privilege of traveling abroad and meeting and operating in some wonderful DXers facilities. Visiting with ON4UN, ON5NT, and VS6DX were memorable trips. One of the trips that really stands out was my two weeks in Jordan and Cyprus in 1979 when my family and I were guest of JY1, King Hussein.



Hosting radio friends and DXers in our home from all over the world has also been a fun part of the hobby for my XYL Carol, KA4WUR and me. We have met wonderful friends from all continents that are still part of our radio family of friends.

In my earlier DXing years I was QSL manager for some really neat DX stations. I handled cards for these stations: KB6CZ (Canton Is.), VK9MM, P29MM, MP4BHH, MP4QBK, MP4MBB, A4XFA, 4S7JD, 9L1GQ and 9L2SL. I was personally active as C6AFR, C6/K4MQG, FS/K4MQG, VP9/K4MQG, and XE3/K4MQG.

The great conditions of the 1970s and early 1980s positioned me to work a lot of DX and many band countries on 80-10 Meters. When CQ announced the 5 Band WAZ award starting in 1979 I really felt driven to the award, never dreaming I would become the first North America station and the second in the world to achieve the 200 award. My 80 and 40 QSOs then were with 1/4 wave sloppers.

In the early 1990s I acquired a 2 element Create 80 Meter yagi and stacked it under a 2 element 40 Meter beam. The 80 meter yagi was at 115 ft on a nice hill. Picture attached.

Did not get interested in 160 and 6 Meters until after retirement in 2000 when I also became active in the DXCC Challenge award.

Have also been active in several ARRL and CQ organizations for many years. Managed the ARRL W4-K4-N4 QSL Bureau from 1981 to 1988. In 1988, I was then asked to become the ARRL Roanoke Division DXAC Representative and am still active in this position today. I am also a QSL Field Checker for both ARRL and CQ DX awards.

Participated in the start up and early activities of INDEXA in 1983 with the late W4WMQ. I have been President and Vice President of INDEXA and am currently a director. Watching INDEXA grow for the past 38 years has been very inspiring.

As of July 2021, my ARRL and CQ Awards confirmed totals are as follows:

DXCC Mixed: 380; CW: 353; Phone: 376; Digital: 233; DXCC Challenge=3195/3048

5BWAZ (#2); CQ DX Honor Roll: CW=339, SSB=340; VUCC=335, 160M=211; 80M=353; 40M=354; 30M=345; 20M=377; 17M=346; 15M=367; 12M=341; 10M=361; 6M=140

73, Gary Dixon, K4MQG  
Fort Mill, SC



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# Club Log DX Report

Band	QSOs	% DX	Graph
160M	5,834	2.28	
80M	41,232	14.24	
60M	10,788	29.57	
40M	152,990	21.33	
30M	63,912	41.48	
20M	218,947	40.35	
17M	81,653	55.59	
15M	68,694	43.17	
12M	10,243	24.32	
10M	24,377	13.78	
6M	19,186	7.92	
4M	79	5.06	
2M	8,884	2.65	

Mode	% Use	QSOs	Graph
FT8	67.78	481,048	
CW	18.97	134,634	
SSB	7.99	56,713	
FT4	4.51	31,983	
FM	0.25	1,746	
MFSK	0.18	1,311	
SSTV	0.07	469	
MSK144	0.07	462	
PSK	0.06	432	
DIGITALVOICE	0.04	262	
RTTY	0.03	225	
JT65	0.01	90	
AM	0.01	56	
All other	0.04	291	

Rank	Prefix	Entity Name
1.	P5	DPRK (NORTH KOREA)
2.	3Y/B	BOUVET ISLAND
3.	FT5/W	CROZET ISLAND
4.	BS7H	SCARBOROUGH REEF
5.	CE0X	SAN FELIX ISLANDS
6.	BV9P	PRATAS ISLAND
7.	KH7K	KURE ISLAND
8.	KH3	JOHNSTON ISLAND
9.	3Y/P	PETER 1 ISLAND
10.	FT5/X	KERGUELEN ISLAND
11.	FT/G	GLORIOSO ISLAND
12.	VK0M	MACQUARIE ISLAND
13.	YV0	AVES ISLAND
14.	KH4	MIDWAY ISLAND
15.	ZS8	PRINCE EDWARD & MARION ISLANDS
16.	PY0S	SAINT PETER AND PAUL ROCKS
17.	PY0T	TRINDADE & MARTIM VAZ ISLANDS
18.	KP5	DESECHEO ISLAND
19.	SV/A	MOUNT ATHOS
20.	VP8S	SOUTH SANDWICH ISLANDS



This report is sent to the [Club Log Google Group](#) every 7 days. It's also available daily at 14:30Z from <https://clublog.org/dxreport.html>

It contains a summary of band conditions and activity, based on the data that you and other Club Log users have uploaded. If you have any suggestions or feedback on this report, please email Michael G7VJR at [michael@g7vjr.org](mailto:michael@g7vjr.org)



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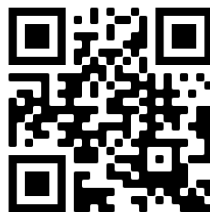
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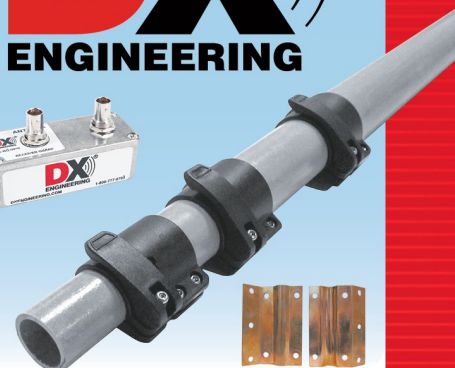
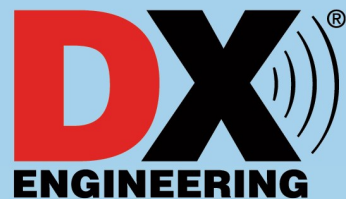
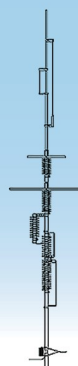
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